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TAGS: [PREF](#) [SMIG](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PTER](#) [IR](#) [TU](#)  
SUBJECT: IRANIAN KURDISH ACTIVIST IN TURKEY SEEKING  
RESETTLEMENT

Classified by Acting Polcouns Charles O. Blaha; reasons 1.4 b  
and d.

11. (C) Summary: Well-known Iranian Kurdish activist Roya Toloui is currently in Turkey seeking re-settlement in a third country, preferably the U.S. She told us Iranian authorities tortured her in detention after her August arrest for allegedly organizing protests in Iranian Kurdistan. End Summary.

12. (C) We met December 21 with Toloui, a journalist and Iranian Kurdish rights activist who has been in Turkey since November seeking to re-settle in a third country. Toloui told us she met December 13 with a UNHCR representative, who indicated that her application for refugee status appeared strong. She is waiting for further instruction from UNHCR on how to proceed with her case. She would like to emigrate to the U.S. with her 13-year-old daughter, Sima, and 6-year-old son, Nima, who are with her in Turkey. Her husband, Pourya Hajizadeh, remains in Iran, but would try to join them. If she is unable to move to the U.S., she said she wants to go "anywhere but Iran."

13. (C) Toloui said Iranian intelligence officials arrested her in Sanandaj, in Iranian Kurdistan, on August 2, during a period of tense conflict following the July 9 death of Kurdish activist Seyyed Kamal Seyyed ader, known as Qaderi or Shavaneh. Qaderi's brother claimed security forces shot and killed Qaderi, then dragged his body from the back of a military vehicle. The death sparked a number of protests that led to violent confrontations between Kurds and security forces. Toloui said security forces killed Qaderi because he spoke in support of the democratic process in Iraq, and had encouraged people in his home town of Mahabat to celebrate the selection of Iraqi Kurdish leader Jalal Talabani as Iraqi president.

14. (C) Toloui said Iranian authorities tried to force her to confess that she was the ringleader of the protests, and to implicate other supposed organizers. She said this is not true -- she was only a participant. She averred that

authorities sought to use the protests as an excuse to punish her for her longstanding efforts to promote Kurdish and women's rights. She said the Iranian government often silences dissenting views by falsely accusing political activists of anti-state violence.

15. (C) For the first six days of her confinement, her captors interrogated Toloui intensely, but did not torture her. She counted 10 separate interrogators the first night between 10:30 p.m. and 4 a.m. The questioning continued uninterrupted for up to 5 hours at a session. After six days of failing to extract a confession, her interrogators adopted harsher measures. They tortured her periodically over the next 17 days. Between torture sessions they kept her in solitary confinement. They tried to intimidate her by telling her, "You're just a Kurd. No one cares what happens to you." Toloui began to describe to us the abuse she endured. But after telling us her captors repeatedly whipped her, she said the subject was still too emotionally painful to discuss further.

16. (U) Though she never confessed, authorities released her on bail. To her surprise, she was able to attain a visa to travel to Thailand to attend an October conference sponsored by the Association for Women's Rights in Development. After attending the conference, she traveled from Bangkok to Ankara, arriving November 1. In Iran, meanwhile, the case against her for "endangering national security" continues -- on the day we met she was scheduled to appear in court.

WILSON